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**PRINCIPAL LEADER OF NORTE VALLE CARTEL EXTRADITED FROM  
COLOMBIA TO FACE CHARGES IN THE UNITED STATES**

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and MICHELLE M. LEONHART, the Acting Administrator of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), announced today the extradition of DIEGO MONTOYA SANCHEZ, a/k/a "Don Diego" -- a former FBI top-ten most wanted fugitive and principal leader of the Norte Valle Cartel ("NVC") -- from Colombia to the United States to face federal charges. MONTOYA SANCHEZ faces drug-trafficking-related charges in the Southern District of Florida and the District of Columbia. Assistant United States Attorneys for the Southern District of New York are in charge of the District of Columbia case.

On March 11, 2004, a federal grand jury indicted MONTOYA SANCHEZ and eight other NVC leaders on drug trafficking and racketeering charges in the District of Columbia. A superseding Indictment was returned on April 29, 2004 (the "District of Columbia Indictment"). As alleged in the District of Columbia Indictment:

MONTOYA SANCHEZ and the other cartel leaders worked together with various Colombian drug transportation specialists to transport multi-ton loads of cocaine from Peru, Colombia, and other South American locations to the Valle del Cauca region of Colombia. The cartel members then used trucks or airplanes to transport the cocaine to the Pacific coast port city of Buenaventura. They also worked with Mexican groups that shipped the cocaine to Mexico via speed boats, fishing vessels, and other maritime conveyances, for ultimate delivery to the United States.

Between 1990 and 2004, the NVC is alleged to have exported a total of more than 1.2 million pounds (or 500 metric tons) of cocaine, worth in excess of \$10 billion, from Colombia to Mexico and ultimately to the United States for resale. Among other things, MONTOYA SANCHEZ is alleged to have conspired with others in connection with a 1993 shipment of approximately 7,300 kilograms of cocaine and a 1997 shipment of more than 10,000 kilograms.

The cartel members used violence and brutality to further their goals, including routinely murdering rivals, individuals who failed to pay for drugs, and NVC members and associates whose loyalty was suspect. The NVC also routinely used corrupt Colombian officials. Among other things, MONTOYA SANCHEZ is alleged in 2000 or 2001 to have attempted to bribe a Colombian legislator in an effort to make it more difficult to extradite Colombian narcotics traffickers to the United States to face prosecution for their narco-trafficking crimes.

The District of Columbia Indictment resulted from an investigation led by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, with cooperation and support from the United States Attorneys' Offices in the Eastern District of New York and the Southern District of Florida, as well as the Criminal Division's Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section.

MONTOYA SANCHEZ arrived in Miami and will make his initial appearance there on Monday before United States Magistrate Judge WILLIAM C. TURNOFF, on charges that he faces in the Southern District of Florida. Specifically, MONTOYA SANCHEZ was charged in a fifth superseding Indictment in the Southern District of Florida with cocaine trafficking, obstruction of justice, witness retaliation by murder, and money laundering. The charges against MONTOYA SANCHEZ will proceed first in the Southern District of Florida; upon conclusion of that case, he will face the charges in the District of Columbia.

Acting United States Attorney LEV. L. DASSIN stated: "The arrest and extradition of MONTOYA SANCHEZ is a landmark in the Department's coordinated effort to dismantle the notorious and violent Norte Valle Cartel. We are grateful to our law enforcement partners at the DEA and in the Colombian government for their tireless support of this investigation. This Office will continue to pursue the world's most powerful and dangerous narcotics kingpins, wherever they may be, so that they, like MONTOYA SANCHEZ, may face justice."

"As a leader of Colombia's Norte Valle Cartel, DIEGO

MONTOYA was one of the most powerful and violent cocaine traffickers in the world," said DEA Acting Administrator MICHELE M. LEONHART. "Thanks to the collaborative efforts with our Colombian partners, this drug kingpin will no longer terrorize innocent citizens and profit from the sale of his drugs on American soil."

The charges in the District of Columbia carry a mandatory minimum sentence of ten years and maximum sentence of life, except that, pursuant to agreement in connection with his extradition, the United States has provided assurances to Colombia that MONTOYA SANCHEZ will not be required to serve a life sentence in the case. The District of Columbia Indictment also seeks the forfeiture of \$10 billion from MONTOYA SANCHEZ.

Mr. DASSIN thanked the DEA Bogota Country Office and Special Operations Division for their leadership in the investigation and the Colombian National Police for their invaluable support. He also thanked the Department of Justice Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs for its assistance in MONTOYA's extradition.

Assistant United States Attorneys REBECCA MONCK-RICIGLIANO and MARSHALL A. CAMP are in charge of the prosecution of the District of Columbia case.

The charges and allegations contained in the Indictment are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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